

# Dillon Resource Management Plan

## Update #2 March 2002

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*This is the second in a series of update letters you'll be receiving as we move through the planning process and develop an RMP for BLM managed public lands in the Dillon Field Office.*



*If you received this letter, you are on our mailing and/or email list. If there is a problem with your address information, or you would like to be removed, please contact Andrea Wiggins at (406) 683-8022 or send an email to [MT\\_Dillon\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:MT_Dillon_RMP@blm.gov). The BLM Dillon Field Office address is 1005 Selway Drive, Dillon, Montana 59725. If you know of someone who would like to be added to the mailing list, pass this information on and have them contact Andrea or the email box.*

*You may also visit our website at [www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp](http://www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp).*

In our first Update, we promised to summarize the comments submitted during the RMP scoping period. Below you will find a sampling of the comments that we received during scoping and information on adjustments we have made to the issues and planning criteria. Read on....

## What Have We Done with Your Comments?

All comments received during scoping have been reviewed by the BLM, and assignments have been made to specialists on the planning team for the sections of the plan they are working on. BLM will consider those comments that are within the scope of our Resource Management Plan. Some information will be useful as the planning team works on

the analysis of the existing management situation; other comments relate to other steps of the planning process such as alternative development and impact analysis, and will be considered as those portions of the RMP/EIS are prepared.

We used your comments to help us make adjustments to the prelimi-

nary issues that were identified prior to scoping and to refine our planning criteria.

Below is a sample of the kinds of comments received during scoping. This is only a brief summary of comments. A longer more detailed summary is available at [www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp](http://www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp).

## What Did We Hear You Say About....

### Planning in General

Reach out to other agencies in the State and Federal government. Use subheadings and additional information to better describe the issues. Define what you mean by natural or native communities or systems—given that humans have been influencing the environ-

ment for thousands of years. Use the best available scientific information; use only science in developing the plan; make sure to apply social considerations when developing the plan. Build flexibility into the plan. Base the plan on the principles of

multiple use and sustained yield, the historic, present and potential uses of the land, together with an understanding and consideration for the degree of local dependence on the resources from public land.

# What Did We Hear You Say About....(cont'd)

## The Use of Public Lands

Don't let a particular resource use dominate either the use or preservation side of the equation. Balance uses. Manage public lands more for the benefit of fish and wildlife than for livestock. Keep existing uses the same but limit future commercial uses and development. Consider additional actions beyond the Guidelines for

Livestock Grazing set out by the Western Montana Resource Advisory Council. Provide for the continued economic and practical viability of the livestock industry in southwest Montana. Cattle grazing should not encroach on elk habitat and elk range. Look positively at mining, drilling for oil, and timber so we can produce for

our own needs at home. Drilling for oil and gas on public lands should not be allowed. We need a program of long-term, sustainable forestry to keep a local one or two person mill in business (but no new roads). Manage timber to meet forest health.

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## Alternatives

Make sure you develop a reasonable range of alternatives. Identify the Preferred Alternative. Develop an alternative emphasizing Resource Restoration to actively restore rangeland habitats,

wetlands, and riparian and aquatic areas. Approach the designation of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern as alternatives to proposed wilderness, Wild and Scenic Rivers, or other special

management areas that are more restrictive. Land use alternatives need to be documented possibilities, not preference utility values.

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## Impacts

Consider impacts to biodiversity, wildlife and fish, water quality, wetlands, stream drainage patterns, air quality, fragmentation, and connectivity. Consider impacts on opportunities to explore for, lease, and develop oil and gas

resources. Consider the short and long term effects on local, state, and regional economies. Consider the economics of hunting, tourism, and biodiversity as well as the grazing and local ranching economy. Look at cumulative impacts,

including impacts on adjacent private lands. Consider the cumulative impacts of developing water sources for livestock on productivity of sage grouse.

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## Inventory

Do more inventory before you start the RMP. Re-inventory the planning area for additional wilderness values. Get rid of Wilder-

ness Study Areas. We need a comprehensive inventory of flora, fauna, archaeology, geological wonders, and historic sites. Map

wildlife corridors. Old growth habitats should be mapped and delineated by species.

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## Livestock Grazing

Maintain the current level of livestock grazing. Livestock grazing

is impacting wildlife. Use grazing as a tool to manage rangelands.

Protect 25% of the planning area from livestock grazing.

# What Did We Hear You Say About....(cont'd)

## Wildlife

Identify indicator species. Develop Habitat Management Plans for indicator species. Develop Habitat Management Plans for sage grouse, antelope, big horn sheep, pygmy rabbit, beaver, and ruffed grouse. Wildlife should have

equal footing with domestic livestock grazing. Wildlife has its place, but not to the exclusion of all else. Use the tools of high-yield agriculture to provide wildlife habitat and a healthier environment. Significant manage-

ment changes, especially regarding fire management and grazing, must be implemented to protect sage grouse habitat and populations. There is no scientific proof that grazing has anything to do with sage grouse declines.

## Vegetation

A key objective of the plan should be maintenance of the sagebrush steppe ecosystem. Sagebrush

should be controlled. Allocation of additional AUMs should be con-

sidered when scientifically supported.

## Special Status Species

People are more important than threatened or endangered species.

Ensure rapid recovery of designated species. Protect the Axotl

salamander. Develop a Habitat Management Plan for lynx.

## Watershed Management

Develop an expanded water quality monitoring plan. Look at moose, antelope, deer, and elk numbers and their effect on riparian areas and water quality.

Identify key streams for which BLM will develop plans to restore fish and adjacent habitat. Voluntary Best Management Practices should address water quality, fish,

and riparian issues so as not to hamper users or the rural economy.

## Access and Travel Management

Provide access for hunting opportunities. Enforce travel restrictions where they are in place. Keep access for motorized recrea-

tion at the same current level. Treat all motorized uses the same (a restriction for pickup trucks is a restriction for ATVs and motor-

cycles too). Consider noxious weeds, Wilderness Study Areas, and enforcement when doing travel planning.

## The Biggest Concern

Weeds are the biggest problem. Fences are the most important issue in the RMP. Wildlife corri-

dors are a major concern. The conflict between livestock grazing

and providing for wildlife is the biggest concern.

# What Did We Hear You Say About....(cont'd)

## Special Designations, Or Things You Want to Protect

Make sure you are managing the current Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) to protect wilderness characteristics. WSAs need to go away. Consider all roadless areas over 5000 acres for addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System. Leave the rivers alone. We are against designation of

Wild and Scenic Rivers. ACECs should be emphasized. ACEC designation is an outdated concept. Use caution and common sense—don't get carried away. Consider that when something is designated to be preserved, it ends up getting more use. Protect Virginia City. Protect the

Lewis and Clark Trail. Protect the Centennial Valley. Consider the Big Hole and Beaverhead Rivers and Big Sheep Creek in the Wild and Scenic River study. Protect the local economy and ranching lifestyle.

## Adjustments to Major Planning Issues Based on Your Comments

A **planning issue** is defined as a matter of controversy, dispute, or general concern over resource management activities, the environment, or land uses. While planning issues become “drivers” of the plan, many other basic environmental and management issues are also addressed to provide comprehensive management guidance for all resources and to satisfy legal requirements.

BLM identified seven preliminary planning issue categories prior to public scoping. These included the following:

- Vegetation Management, especially sagebrush-steppe habitats
- Watershed Management, especially water quality, fisheries, and riparian habitats
- Management/Designation of Special Areas
- Special Status Species Conservation and Recovery
- Travel Management and Access to Public Land
- Commercial Uses of Public Land
- Land Tenure Adjustment

Scoping comments, combined with additional information from the planning team, resulted in adjustment and restatement of these issues. The following adjustments were made:

ments were made:

- The preliminary issue category of Vegetation Management was split into three separate focused questions relating to upland and riparian vegetation, forests and woodlands, and noxious weeds.
- The preliminary issue category of Watershed Management was merged into the questions relating to upland and riparian vegetation. Water quality concerns will be addressed in the plan, but are interrelated with healthy riparian, rangeland, and forest habitats, and are not stated as a separate planning issue.
- The preliminary category of Management/Designation of “Special” Areas was split into statements about Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) and Wild and Scenic Rivers, respectively, since much interest and concern revolved around these issues.
- The preliminary issue category of Land Tenure Adjustment, or changes in ownership of public lands, was dropped as a major planning issue since alternatives and decisions about the adjustment of public lands, either through disposal or acquisition, will be driven by other program concerns.

These adjustments resulted in the identification of the following eight (8) planning issues:

## Adjustments to Major Planning Issues Based on Your Comments (cont'd)

### ISSUE #1

How will riparian and upland vegetation be managed to achieve healthy rangelands and provide for live-stock grazing and fish and wildlife habitat?

### ISSUE #2

How will forest and woodland resources be managed for forest health and to reduce dangerous fuel loads, as well as to provide fish and wildlife habitat and commercial wood products?

### ISSUE #3

How will noxious weeds and other invasive species be controlled in the planning area and what conditions will apply to permitted activities?

### ISSUE #4

How will conservation and recovery strategies and guidelines for threatened and endangered and other species be applied in the planning area and how will that impact recreational and commercial uses?

### ISSUE #5

What level of commercial or other authorized use should be allowed in the planning area, and what conditions will be applied to permitted activities?

### ISSUE #6

Should any areas be designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern and what kind of management is needed to protect the values they contain?

### ISSUE #7

Should any rivers be recommended for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers system?

### ISSUE #8

How should travel be managed to provide access for recreation, commercial uses, and general enjoyment of the public lands while protecting natural and cultural resources?

**It is important to remember that many areas of concern are not identified in the issues above. A number of other issues and management concerns identified in public scoping and by the planning team will be addressed by the plan and considered in the effects analysis, but these concerns will not have overriding influence on the development of alternatives.**

Additional information has been prepared for each planning issue that provides a brief overview and identifies some of the factors to be considered as the RMP is developed. You can get more information on any of the issues identified above by visiting our website at [www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp](http://www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp).

Keep in mind that as we proceed, there may be additional adjustments as we continue to review information and move through the planning process.

## Adjustments to Planning Criteria

Planning Criteria guide the plan, avoid unnecessary data collection and analysis, and identify the legal, policy, and regulatory constraints that direct or limit BLM's ability to resolve issues. As a result of scoping comments and additional review by the planning team, the criteria were refined. Changes have been made as follows:

- a statement was added regarding BLM's multiple use mandate
- a statement was added regarding use of available inventories

- the criteria regarding existing Wilderness Study Area recommendations and additional inventory requirements was separated and clarified
- a statement was added on using information from previously completed landscape analyses
- a statement was added recognizing the State of Montana's authority over water rights and water law
- a statement regarding consideration of Tribal concerns was added

## Adjustments to Planning Criteria (cont'd)

The full list of planning criteria is included below.

### PLANNING CRITERIA

- The principles of multiple use and sustained yield as set forth in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act will be applied in the RMP.
- The RMP will comply with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.
- The RMP will be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will comply with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) standards.
- RMP decisions will apply to lands in Beaverhead and Madison County under the jurisdiction of the Dillon Field Office. This includes split estate, where subsurface minerals are Federal, but the surface is privately owned or another agency (except for the Forest Service) manages the surface estate. This does not include public lands in Beaverhead County that lie south of the Big Hole River between Wisdom and Divide. These lands are under the jurisdiction of the Butte Field Office.
- The RMP will primarily rely on available inventories of public lands and their resources.
- Boundaries and recommendations on Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) identified as a result of inventory conducted under Section 603 of FLPMA and awaiting action by Congress will not be changed by the RMP.
- Additional inventory for wilderness characteristics will be completed for public lands that have not yet been reviewed, or where new information is provided that shows additional inventory is necessary.
- Information from the landscape analyses conducted for the Gravelly and Pioneer Mountains will be used in development of the RMP.
- The RMP will incorporate the Standards for Rangeland Health and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing as set out by the Resource Advisory Council (RAC).
- The RMP will incorporate the Montana/Dakotas Statewide Fire Management Plan and associated Dillon Fire Management Plan update.
- The RMP will adopt the provisions of The Montana Weed Management Plan approved in January 2001.
- The RMP will incorporate decisions approved in January 2001 regarding travel management in the southern portion of the Centennial Valley.
- The RMP will consider the existing recovery plans and management strategies and guidelines in place for federally listed threatened and endangered species which utilize the planning area, including whooping crane, bald eagle, grizzly bear, wolf, and lynx. State management plans will be considered for delisted species. The RMP will incorporate by reference decisions resulting from the Statewide Programmatic Lynx Amendment/ Environmental Assessment.
- The RMP will consider conservation and management strategies developed for protection, conservation, and restoration of westslope cutthroat trout, fluvial arctic grayling, and sage grouse.
- The RMP will recognize the State of Montana's responsibility to manage fish and wildlife populations, including hunting and fishing uses.
- The RMP will recognize the State of Montana's authority regarding Montana water law and water rights.
- RMP decisions will be compatible to the extent possible with the plans and mandates of other agencies and governments that share jurisdiction in the region.
- The RMP will recognize federal land management agency obligations under applicable tribal treaties and laws or executive orders relating to Native American reserved rights, religious freedoms, and traditional use areas.
- The RMP will consider and integrate local, State-wide, and national interests.
- Actions proposed by the RMP must be achievable given technological, budget, and staffing limits.

## Internet Access

We are happy to report that internet and email access have been restored to our office. BLM internet access had been prohibited since early December under a court order concerning Indian Trust Fund litigation brought

against the Department of the Interior. If you tried to email us or reach the Dillon RMP website, you were unsuccessful due to the prohibition. The shutdown impacted day-to-day communications and gathering and dissemi-

nation of data and information. We are hopeful additional shutdowns are not in our future. We will continue to update and post information on the Dillon RMP website at [www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp](http://www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp), which we invite you to visit.

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## Western Montana Resource Advisory Council Forms Issue-Based Subgroups for Dillon RMP

Resource Advisory Councils are officially sanctioned by the Secretary of the Interior to provide advice to the BLM on public land management issues. The Western Montana Resource Advisory Council, also known as "the RAC", provides advice to the Dillon, Butte, and Missoula Field Offices and welcomed eight (8) new members to the 15 member council at their January meeting. One of the main topics on the agenda was the Dillon RMP and how the RAC might be most effectively involved with the Dillon RMP process. The RAC was presented with an

overview of the RMP process and the types of decisions to come from this type of comprehensive plan, as well as some options for their involvement. After thought and discussion, members of the RAC decided to form issue-based subgroups under their charter to address some specific topics that will be integral components of the RMP. Subgroups operate as fact-finding bodies that report back to the entire RAC with recommendations. Each subgroup is chaired by a member of the RAC, and assisted by a professional facilitator from the Montana Consensus

Council. Subgroups have been, or are being formed for the following topics:

- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Travel Management
- Wild and Scenic Rivers

A fourth topic regarding commercial recreational use and permitting may also be addressed using the subgroup approach.

For more information about the Western Montana RAC, visit their website at [www.mt.blm.gov/bdo/pages/bzrac.html](http://www.mt.blm.gov/bdo/pages/bzrac.html).

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## Draft Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report

The Draft Wild and Scenic River Eligibility Report is now available. News releases were sent to a number of area newspapers and radio stations, and a notice was sent to everyone on the RMP mailing list. Briefings were provided to the Beaverhead County Commissioners on March 4 and to the Madison County Commissioners on March 11.

The BLM is requesting public comment on the draft eligibility recommendations included in the

report. Eligibility is only the first step in the Wild and Scenic River review process.

To request a copy of the report, contact Andrea Wiggins at (406) 683-8022, call our toll-free number at 1-877-521-2889, or send us an email at [MT\\_Dillon\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:MT_Dillon_RMP@blm.gov). You can also take a look at the report by visiting our website at [www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp](http://www.mt.blm.gov/dfo/rmp).

Comments on the report must be

received by April 30, 2002 for full consideration. Written comments should be addressed to Renee Johnson, Dillon RMP Project Leader, 1005 Selway Drive, Dillon, MT 59725. Electronic comments can be sent to our email box at [MT\\_Dillon\\_RMP@blm.gov](mailto:MT_Dillon_RMP@blm.gov). BLM staff will be available at the Information Fair to be held April 9, 10, and 11 at the BLM Dillon Field Office (see details on the Information Fair in this brochure) to answer questions you might have.

## Toll Free Calling and Information

A toll free telephone number is available for callers who want to listen to pre-recorded information about the progress of the Dillon RMP. You can also reach an operator and ask to speak to a live person if you call during regular business hours, Monday-Friday, 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or you can leave a message. The toll free number is **1-877-521-2889**.

## Information Fair

The Dillon Field Office will host an Information Fair on April 9, 10, and 11, 2002 at the BLM office in Dillon. The purpose of the Fair is to share information compiled to date that will be used to develop the Dillon Resource Management Plan (RMP). The event will run from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. each day and will feature baseline resource information acquired by specialists in wildlife, minerals, range management, forestry, recreation, soil, water, air, and cultural resources. Most of the information will be in map format. The same information will be available each day and the public may view the information anytime during Fair hours. Resource specialists will be available to discuss information and answer questions, but no formal presentations are planned. You can also use this event to discuss the Wild and Scenic River review process and the recently released Draft Eligibility Report with BLM staff.

The Dillon Field Office is located at 1005 Selway Drive (behind the Lion's Den Restaurant) in Dillon. For more information, contact Renee Johnson at 683-8016 or Andrea Wiggins at 683-8022.

***For further information on the RMP and the planning process, contact  
Renee Johnson, RMP Project Leader at (406) 683-8016.***



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